

concerning

MARY FARACI

on her retirement



Mary with Eric Lachance

BY TAYLOR HAGOOD

I could write a book on everything Mary Faraci means to me and to the English Department, the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, and Florida Atlantic University as a whole. She has inspired and amused students with her utterly unique blend of humor, insight, wisdom, and vision. Despite the years of accumulating experience, Mary has nevertheless always managed to stay the very same age as the students themselves in her heart and spirit. They know she not only cares and empathizes but that, in many ways, she is one of and with them. So many times when my office was across from hers I would hear her laughing wholeheartedly with students, commiserating with them, even scheming with them at times, for she was very much on their side.

And yet she was equally on the side of the university, the department, the college, and her colleagues, and I was very lucky to have her as my mentor. I began to glimpse how special Mary is on my interview: my flight was delayed, which required a change of schedule leading to Mary and I having dinner alone at the Crab House in Jupiter. As I enjoyed that soft January night talking with her, while pelicans drifted down to their perches against the backdrop of the lighthouse, I listened to her pitch-perfect, wit-laden description of the advantages of this job. Little did we know when we parted company that night that her father would pass away within hours. Yet, even though I did not see her again during the rest of the interview I felt a remarkably deep bond. We have celebrated that dinner almost each year since.

Once I was hired and began my job, Mary's mentorship was unerring. Navigating a department, with its personalities, quirks, and feuds, can be very challenging for a young faculty member, and Mary always had the right advice. Mary genuinely loves her colleagues, and she knows better than just about anyone how to keep the peace and to do so with fairness. She can advise when to speak and when to be quiet, always with an eye to achieving the best thing for everyone. Meanwhile, if ever I ran into a snag with teaching, I always knew I could come to her with any questions or concerns, and always she knew the correct thing to say. And there have been so many things she has said to me that have stuck: one she had gleaned from her brother-in-law, "Pay now, or pay later," a comment full of depth when she spoke it. The one that made the biggest difference in my career as a scholar came when I was trying to decide about whether or not to accept certain publication invitations, and she replied, "Taylor, time is not on our side." I have not always done a good job of remembering that in my personal life, but I took the lesson well when it came to scholarship, and I am always grateful to her for it.



Mary with Kritzia Sanabria (top);
in Florence, Italy (below)



Mary enjoying retirement
poolside with her sister

Again, I could write on and on for hundreds of pages about Mary. She has been much more than a colleague or even mentor to me. In so many ways she is a family member, an aunt who makes me feel secure, that she is always on my side. I love her with all my heart, and I know that whatever I have done right as a colleague, teacher, and scholar derives from her guidance and influence and that everything I have done wrong in those capacities has been from my own willful ignoring and departing from that guidance and influence. I am sorry for anyone who has not been mentored by her, for channeling Mary is always the right thing to do, and I hope to do so much better from now on because she will no longer be in the meetings, smiling in her mischievous way, making sure to touch base with everyone, providing just the right take on whatever new policy has come down the pike or whatever difficult situation has arisen. Every department needs a Mary Faraci, and yet there is only one.

And let me say that I hope the one and only Mary Faraci enjoys retirement. I hope she gets to spend plenty of time in Florence. I hope everyone she meets gets to enjoy her brilliance and humor the way I have. And I hope that her personality lingers in the halls and walkways of Florida Atlantic University forever.